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ABSTRACT

One of a series of case studies on mainstreaming programs, the report describes a pre-kindergarten program serving disabled children. Interviews with program participants and classroom observations focus on the total learning environment and the experience of five mainstreamed children. Initial comments address the program's physical setting and the relationship between the pre-kindergarten program and the elementary school. The following aspects are considered for each of two class levels: the programs's open administration, teaching staff, student population, classroom environment, and organization and daily activities. It is explained that special strategies are not employed for children with disabilities, but rather that general practices such as positive reinforcement are implemented for all children. Examples of programmatic elements related to mainstreaming (teacher preparation and training pre-kindergarten early childhood models) are cited. The effects of the program's failure to integrate special interventions and teaching strategies are noted. (CL)

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"The Other 10%: Integration In A Pre-School Program"

Sandy Mlinarcik

EC171314

"If You Get The Right Teacher, You Can Do Anything."

INTRODUCTION

Starting in 1966, the New York State Board of Regents gave financial assistance to school districts for operating Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) programs in the public schools. Under the program fifty Pre-K programs have been created. The State Education Department provides 89% of the funding. The State regulations mandates 90% of the families served, meet at least one of the following criteria:

- family on AFDC
- family on relief
- family eligible for medicaid
- family with foster children
- family with high density of population per dwelling
- family residence in remote rural areas
- family with chronic illness
- family with record of limited school achievement
- single parent family
- frequent change of address

Guidelines from the State provide a model for service delivery. This model incorporates the curriculum, evaluation of progress, parent involvement, and health and social services which characterize all of the State's Pre-K programs.

The Pre-K program, which was selected for this study, is one of the largest in the State. It has been in operation since 1973 and has served children with the following kinds of handicapping conditions:

hearing impaired, Down Syndrome, dwarfism, autism, language delayed, developmentally delayed, intellectually delayed and physically impaired". According to its present director, this Pre-K program accepts children with disabilities by choice, for it is not required by state guidelines.

This study presents a description of the part of the Pre-K program located in Marshview Elementary School. Interviews with program participants and classroom observations focused on the total learning environment and the experiences of five children who were mainstreamed into Marshview's Pre-K classes.

THE SCHOOL SETTING

Marshview is located in a central school district which includes suburban residential neighborhoods, farms and state recreation land, and industrial parks. The school is accessible by local streets, which wind through shopping malls, warehouses, and railroad yards, as well as by an express highway. Not visible from the main road, a long, tree-lined drive leads from the road to a large, oval-shaped lot which separates two, practically identical buildings. Marshview's K-3 classes are in one of the buildings, while 4-7 classes are located in the other.

The buildings are modern, one-story, brick and glass structures. The surrounding flat, open fields are edged with pine trees, and they provide a striking change of scenery to the busy streets which led to the schools. Without the cues provided by tennis and basketball courts alongside the grade 4-7 building, the setting could be mistaken for an insurance company or a group of medical offices.

All of the children who attend Marshview, including the children enrolled in the Pre-K program, are Caucasian. While the district's population is made up of a variety of ethnic groups, only a very small percentage of the district's population is comprised of minority groups.

Inside Marshview Elementary

The school building in which the pre-school program is housed is square with a glass-enclosed patio, in the center. Architecturally it is an "open" school, without walls to separate the interior into classrooms, corridors, and offices. Completely carpeted, the environment is unusually quiet. Plants, artwork, and books are attractively displayed on walls and makeshift divides.

Although the school was built to be open, teachers have created classrooms with their own walls. File cabinets, bookcases and desks are arranged in such a way that space is sectioned off. Childrens' desks are arranged in rows facing in ways to make rooms. The gym, kindergarten and offices are structurally enclosed and located at one end of the school. At the opposite end of the building are the Pre-K classes, referred to as Marshview I and II. Marshview I is a large, open space set off from the rest of the school by lockers and lavatory walls. Marshview II occupies what had once been the three enclosed special education classrooms. There is an outside entrance close to Marshview I. Only the Pre-K classes use this door when going and coming.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRE-K PROGRAM AND MARSHVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Pre-K program rents its space from the school district, and other than occupying space, operates independently from the school. The Pre-K classrooms are physically separate and do not follow the regular school schedule. Meals are prepared and eaten in the classrooms rather than in the school cafeteria. The separateness of the Pre-K program is evident at the administrative level as well. The director is like a principal, hiring, firing and responsible for Marshview as well as two other pre-school centers.

Differences in educational approaches between the pre-school and the rest of Marshview are perceived by the Pre-K director as further contributing to the separateness of the program. As the director said:

> "Well, we're really separate. Except for the guidelines from the state, I can do what I like. The curriculum from the state is quite specific - it's not bad really. They want it to be very activity oriented - interest areas, cooking, art - more like the British infant schools. None of the real structured, academic stuff you see in kindergartens now, a real emphasis on social skills. Our classrooms are really different from the rest of the school."

THE ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL OF THE PRE-K CLASSES

Characteristics of the Marshview Pre-K Program

When I studied the program it was serving 132 children in six classes. In compliance with the New York State guidelines, 90% of the children are either from low income families or from families meeting one of the criteria previously described. It is open to children who reach their third birthday on or before December first. Four year old children are given priority for admission.

The four Pre-K classes at Marshview Elementary provide a four day program. Home visits are scheduled for every Friday. The two classes in Marshview I have a head teacher, three assistants, and twenty four children. The two classes in Marshview II are functioning without a head teacher due to a budget cut. In each of these classes, there are eighteen children and three assistants. One of the assistants is a certified teacher, who has been designated "unit leader" by the program director. The 6:1 ratio of children to staff is required by the state education department guidelines.

The daily program at the Marshview Pre-K is two and one half hours long, with the arrival and dismissal times staggered as follows:

Marshview I	8:00 - 10:30 a.m. 11:30 - 2:00 p.m.
Marshview II	8:45 - 11:15 a.m. 12:15 - 2:45 p.m.

Each day the children receive a meal and snack. The daily program is described by the director as "a balance of structured, unstructured, large and small groups and individualized activities." The Pre-K program provides vision and hearing screenings, which are done by the program's nurse. A full-time speech therapist, who provides services to all six Pre-K classes, is also employed by the program.

The Pre-K Director and Her Relationship to the Program

The director Rita Marcus, is petite and attractive and looks younger than her age of forty five. Ms. Marcus has an extremely efficient, no-nonsense manner. She speaks rapidly, answering questions at great length and with no hesitation. Prior to directing the Pre-K program, she taught in the primary grades and completed a graduate program in educational administration. Her motivation in becoming an administrator was "to change how things are for a lot of kids". Ms. Marcus has a clear idea about how things should be. She views her position as an administrator to be an opportunity to implement the educational values and perspective which she holds. Ms. Marcus speaks with enthusiasm and unconditional positive regard for the Pre-K program, staff, and her own efforts.

Ms. Marcus describes her administrative style as "open":

"Okay, one thing that I should mention is that I sort of have an open administration, I do, I shouldn't say sort of, I do. I really try to bridge any gaps there might have been before previous directors and the staff. I want teachers to feel open, you know, to come and talk to me, I have been open in the things that I do. No one had ever discussed budgets with the staff before, and last year no one ever knew what numbers, what figures, what cuts, and I'm very open, maybe it's because maybe I feel I shouldn't be the only one that should be worried - might as well have twenty people worried!"

Ms. Marcus is adamant and clear in her opinion of how a school administrator's role should be carried out:

"I think an administrator has to be a teacher first - and continue to be a teacher. I don't think anybody can sit in an office and direct a program or direct a school by being in a closed office. So, perhaps my first goal is to be in classrooms with kids and teachers - it's the only way I can see what's good and what needs to be changed and what shouldn't be changed. I also feel that I should be, I feel myself that an administrator should be a master teacher, now a lot of people don't agree with me, but I believe if we're going to direct teachers and kids - help teachers grow - there has to be a model, just as teachers are models for kids, I think principals should be models for teachers, and so I do lessons in the classrooms; along my own interests, music happens to be one, so I do music lessons, I'm also interested in language and reading and so I did a special reading program, which I think I mentioned to you, earlier in the year."

Just as Ms. Marcus has identified parent involvement and open, individualized education as priorities in her administration, so has she identified mainstreaming:

Observer:

"Rita, could you explain how the children who are mainstreamed get into your program. They're not part of that 90% mandate from the state, right?"

Director:

"No, they're not. The state guidelines say that 90% of the youngsters accepted into the program must come from low-income families. That leaves me 10% to play around with. So, I use that 10% to mainstream handicapped youngsters. Several times we've taken a youngster with a handicap even though we were full."

Observer:

"The state Pre-K program is different from Headstart in that 10% then."

Director:

"That's right. The state doesn't say I have to accept children with handicaps, but it's a priority of mine, so I can do it. I'm my own boss...if there's a youngster with a handicap referred to me, I talk it over with my staff and then decide if we can take the child."

Observer:

"So, the autonomy you have makes the mainstreaming possible..."

Director:

"Absolutely! If I had to work through the district offices...forget it. No, I'm my own boss. Thank God!"

THE MARSHVIEW I CLASSES

The Teaching Staff

The team is made up of a lead teacher and three assistants. The lead teacher, Diane Kennedy, is approximately thirty five years of age and has taught kindergarten and primary classes, off and on, for twelve years. Ms. Kennedy is slender, blonde, and soft spoken. She has a calm, controlled manner of speaking and moving in the classroom. Ms. Kennedy gracefully moves throughout the classroom, occasionally making a comment or responding to a child's question, or redirecting the children's behavior, when necessary, to keep it within appropriate limits.

(Two boys pushed a large wooden wagon out of the block area and came scooting, very fast, across the entire length of the room.) Ms. Kennedy: "Jeffery and Mike, that's not the way we use that. I want you to bring it back to the block area. Let me see how carefully you can drive it over...then come help me in the art area. I'll need some help at the water table." (The boys returned to the block area with the wagon and went over to Ms. Kennedy. She asked them to fill the water table. The boys appeared delighted with this task. They put on rubber aprons, filled plastic pails at the sink, and emptied them into the water table.)

While pleasant and warm with the children, Ms. Kennedy's interactions remain controlled, and, at times, she appears to be more of an observer than participant.

Two of the teacher assistants, Ms. Panski and Ms. Dunn, closely resemble Ms. Kennedy in age, appearance, and manner. The third assistant is the oldest member of the team, approximately fifty years of age. Ms. Stanton dresses more casually than the others, and her interactions with the children are more animated and spontaneous. She is the only member of the team who sits on the floor and becomes engaged in the children's play.

The Children

There are twenty four children aged four and five years in both the morning and afternoon classes. All of the children are bussed.

The majority of the children appear healthy, clean, and neatly dressed. Only two children, a boy and a girl, stand out because of their neglected appearnace. On each visit these two children had uncombed hair, dirty mismatched clothing which did not fit them, and very active colds.

The children initiate a lot of their own activity, with little direction from the teachers, chattering to each other and moving freely from one area to another. They play in small groups of two and three, as well as forming groups as large as twelve for certain activities.

Three children have been mainstreamed in the Marshview I classes. In the morning session, there are two children who are identified as having special needs; Craig, a four year old with cystic fibrosis, and Beth, a five year old girl, who is legally blind. Aimee, a five year old girl who attends the afternoon session, has a profound hearing loss and has recently been fitted with the first of her hearing aids. All three children receive special services. Twice a week Craig attends the Cerebral Palsy Center in the afternoon for occupational therapy.

These sessions were soon to be terminated, however. An itinerant teacher for the blind comes to work with Beth less than once a week. The speech therapist, employed by the Pre-K program, provides one-to-one speech and language therapy to Aimee three times a week.

The Classroom Environment

Marshview I has a large, open, rectangular space. Windows run the length of the room. The floor is covered in rust-colored wall-to-wall carpeting, with the exception of a tiled art area in one corner.

The room is divided into the following areas: science, manipulatives (e.g. puzzles, pegboards, sorting materials); art and waterplay; sand; housekeeping (toy appliances, broom and mop, telephones); reading; and blocks. Each area is well stocked with accessories which provide the children with many choices of activities.

All of the furniture and room dividers are movable.

Large, open space is available in the center of the room. The two side walls are covered with bulletin boards. Posters of numbers, colors, seasons, and shapes are mounted at the childrens' eye-level. There is one display for each session, a.m. and p.m., entitled "Child of the Week."

A kitchen area is partitioned off, and this is where the teaching team prepares the meals and snacks. A large sink is located at the entrance to the kitchen area, and wooden staircases, on either side of the sink, make the sink accessible to the children.

A huge rabbit hutch, with legs, stands in the center of the room. One of the parents built the hutch, and a large gray rabbit makes its home in it. The wire mesh on the hutch has openings in it which are large enough to allow the children to pet and feed the rabbit.

Four large tables are lined up in front of the children's cubbies, one for each of the teaching staff. The children eat at these tables, as well as meet in groups of six for activities directed by the teachers.

Organization and Daily Activities

Each adult on the teaching team of Marshview I is designated as a "locker teacher" for a group of six children. "Locker" refers to the storage unit where the children hang their coats and store the papers and toys which go back and forth between their homes and school. The "locker teacher" assumes the main responsibility for the children in her "locker group." This responsibility includes home visits, periodic assessments and recordkeeping required by the state, greeting the children upon arrival, serving the daily meal, and providing small group instruction. The "locker teacher" is assumed to have a good sense of the needs, abilities, and progress of the children in her group. (Ms. Kennedy was leaning against the partition in the block area and the observer walked over to her.)

Observer:

"The children really are busy, Diane."

Ms. Kennedy:

"(laughing) Oh, they love to play. Making a train in this area is the big thing since our fieldtrip to Rome by train."

Observer:

"How is Aimee doing?"

Ms. Kennedy:

"Okay, I guess. You'll probably want to talk with Ms. Panski, she's Aimee's locker teacher."

(The observer later asked the same question of Ms. Panski.)

Observer:

"How do you think Aimee is doing?"

Ms. Panski:

"Skill wise she's really doing okay; there's some catching up she needs to do, like with categories, her language. She was more playing alongside the other kids. I had to almost push her a bit to get into things. She wasn't too active. Now, there's one other little girl who she seems to have paired up with. I don't know if it's Kate taking Aimee in or vice versa, but it's good for both of them. She talks more to Kate when they're off at something together. See them over at that table - that's Kate. (The two girls and one boy were using magic markers on some coloring book pages.) I think Aimee just needs some more time."

The daily schedule is the same for both the morning and afternoon sessions. Upon arrival and being greeted by their locker teachers, the children are allowed approximately twenty minutes of "free play." During this time, only some of the activity areas are open: the sand table with its assortment of scoops, funnels and containers; blocks and trucks; a large wooden alphabet board with movable pieces; manipulatives; and housekeeping. Two members of the team are always occupied in the kitchen area at this time preparing the breakfast or lunch, while the other two staff are circulating throughout the room. Frequently at this time, a locker teacher may take an individual child out of the room for an assessment, such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, or the entire locker group may leave to get weighed and measured by the nurse. The childrens' play is active and self-initiated, and they move freely around the room, with little teacher guidance.

"Free play" is followed by breakfast or lunch. Ms. Kennedy announces "clean-up time" and the children typically respond quickly by putting things away in whatever area they are playing in at that moment. Ms. Kennedy walks through the room, recalling children to certain items which have been left out. Again, with little or no direction, the children independently wash their hands at the sink in the room and seat themselves where they choose at their "locker tables." The children are allowed anything they

request from the table, and several choices are always available. For example, one day lunch consisted of soup, sandwiches, orange slices and milk. The children assembled their own sandwiches, choosing from bologna, cheese, lettuce, mayonnaise and mustard. Soup was served upon request, and the children pour their own milk from pint cartons.

> At Ms. Kennedy's lunch table there is one boy with a very runny nose. Ms. Kennedy has asked him to get some tissues and wipe his nose. He complains that he already did, but Ms. Kennedy responds with "I know, Joey, and you need to do it again." Ms. Kennedy speaks quietly, with patience, and seems to scan the room with her eyes occasionally while talking to the children at her table. She encourages conversation at the table between the children, suggesting to the child next to her that she tell another child across the table about her new pet.
>
> One of the other assistants is showing the sign language labels for the food on the table, combining the signs for orange and tree, etc.. The children seem to be enjoying this, and one child, in particular, seemed quite proficient.

The routine after lunch seems well-established. The children clean up their own places with sponges and a small bucket of water. After the children move to the block area and sit on the rug and mats , one of the teachers leads a large group activity at this time; e.g. reading a story, finger-plays, records.

Following the large group activity, the children have "play choices." Ms. Kennedy announces the choices that are available, including one or two special activities, such as planting seeds, which are also available. All of the staff are in the room at this time, and they facilitate the childrens' activities by assisting with materials, making positive comments, and helping to settle any disagreements that might arise. It is apparent that pairs of children, small groups, and favorite activities had all been formed throughout the school year. There was no hesitation about who was going to play with whom, or where.

Kate grabbed a hold of Aimee by the arm, and they were off to the art area. Kate went to a shelf and hauled out a large plastic bowl - asking Ms. Kennedy: "We want playdough, Ms. Kennedy. Can we do playdough?" Ms. Kennedy responded with "Sure," instructed the girls to wear smocks, and took a picture recipe for playdough off a shelf. The recipe had simple blackline drawings for containers labeled flour, salt, etc.. The two girls went into the kitchen area and took some plastic containers down from a lower shelf, carried them to the art area, and proceeded to open them, using the measuring cups from inside the containers. Ingredients spilled a bit on the table, and Ms. Kennedy intervened at this point:

"Girls, look at the recipe. This one is the flour (pointing to the picture). Which container has this word - flour - on it? Can you show me?"

Kate quickly pulled the correct container toward her, "two cups, I do one first, then you." Aimee did not respond verbally, but stood close by and put both hands into the bowl. Ms. Kennedy observed the playdough makers, occasionally, from several feet away. Kate took charge, continuing to give Aimee directions. They were joined by two more girls, who put on smocks and started working the sticky mixture in their hands. One of them called out, 'Ms. Kennedy, this playdough's too sticky." Ms. Kennedy suggested that they put some flour on their hands. The mixing and kneading continued. Aimee was not talking to the other children, but she was very involved in the activity, smiling, doing her share of the mixing.

Children are directed to their locker tables after "play choices" for a fifteen to twenty minute activity, which is directed by the locker teacher. Readiness work with numbers and letters, categorizing objects, or fine motor activities such as cutting and pasting are typically done at this time.

The task for locker groups today was to draw a picture of a person whom they liked. At each table, the teachers reviewed all the names of the body parts, from head, facial features, to wrist, knees, ankles. The children were given large sheets of paper and pencils. Ms. Panski asked each child "who are you drawing?" Answers ranged from "my grandpa" to "you." The children completed the task with verbal prompting from Ms. Panski "what else does your grandpa have on his face," "what kind of hair does she have - long, short, curly..?" As each child finished, Ms. P. dated their drawings and piled them in front of her.

(The observer was seated near Ms. Panski's table.)

"Oh, they've come a long way. We have to get these for the state. Do you want to see some earlier ones?" She hauled out a large cardboard box which had a file for each child in the class.

Specimen drawings of a person had been taken four times throughout the year, and Albany requests a random sample from each pre-K program.

Following the locker group activity, the children have a simple snack and prepare for the bus ride home. Weather permitting, each locker teacher takes her group outdoors to play about ten minutes prior to the buses' arrival. There is one hour between the morning and afternoon sessions, during which the teaching team has lunch, sets up the activity areas, and makes parent contacts by letter or phone.

THE MARSHVIEW II CLASS

The Teaching Staff

There are three teacher assistants on the Marshview II classroom team. One of the assistants, Lorin Hawley, has been designated as "unit leader." According to the Pre-K director, the title of unit leader is meant to recognize the fact that Ms. Hawley is a certified teacher, although the current budget only allows her an assistant's salary.

Lorin Hawley is about thirty five years old, blonde, and quite overweight. She has a loud laugh and pleasant manner. Although Lorin Hawley is unit leader, much of the responsibility for organizing and carrying out the daily activities seems to be assumed by Marge Phipps, who is extremely energetic and efficient. She speaks rapidly in a loud voice, which can easily be heard throughout the classroom. Ms. Phipps is about forty five years old, slender, and auburn-haired. She has worked in the Pre-K program for several years, but had no formal training in teaching previously. The third member of the team is Lila Sorenson. Ms. Sorenson is in her late forties, heavy-set, and very fair-skinned. She speaks in a high, tiny voice. Ms. Sorenson often prepares the meals, while the other team members are with the children for large group activities.

A fourth team member, Mary Lou Anceti, works half-time in the Pre-K

program. She was hired to attend the morning session with Allison, a girl who was to be mainstreamed into Marshview II's, a.m. class. Earlier in the year, Mary Lou Anceti spent a great deal of time with Allison, working on a one-to-one basis. Now that the student functions independently much of the time, Ms. Anceti serves as a teacher aide. She spends most of her time preparing bulletin board displays, straightening up the materials, and filling in when one of the teacher assistants is out. Mary Lou is tall and slender, and about twenty one years old.

The Marshview II staff differs from that of Marshview I in their style of interacting with the children and with each other. All of the people in Marshview II have less experience both in teaching in general and in this particular Pre-K program. They are more directive with the children and have firmer limits for acceptable behavior.

Ms. Phipps:

"Ok, boys and girls. Listen carefully. When I call your locker group, you go with your locker teacher and line up at the door. We're going outside. All the children in Ms. Sorenson's locker group may go"

(Ms. Phipps pauses while these six children gather themselves up and get into line.)

"Ok, now the children in Ms. Hawley's locker group may go." Allison is in the group but does not get up to leave with the children. She is gazing at the wall but appears to be listening. "Ms. Hawley, do you have everyone in your locker group?"

Ms. Hawley:

"No, I don't. I need one more person, but I don't think I can wait."

Ms. Phipps:

"Allison, who is your locker teacher?"

Allison:

(who has a severe speech impairment) answers with an approximation of "Ms. Hawley."

Ms. Phipps:

"Why didn't you stand up when I said your locker group? I guess you'll have to sit here by yourself while the other children go."

Allison begins to cry.

Ms. Phipps:

"Maybe next time you'll remember to stand up. Ok, the children in Ms. Phipp's group, let's go get ready."

Allison continues crying and starts to get up off the floor but is told she must stay there.

In general, the tone which the teachers create is less spontaneous, with a greater emphasis on completion of specific skill activities.

One characteristic the Marshview I and II teachers have in common, however, is an ability to work smoothly and cooperatively on a team. Each person is aware of her responsibilities and fulfills them efficiently. The success of the program, according to the director, is a result of successfully staffing the classes:

Director:

"Here we have a very neat program, because we have four teachers in every - or three or four teachers in every classroom. The teacher is not isolated, so I have to, when I "pick teams," I have to match personalities and strengths, and weaknesses and talents so that we have a nice balance in our staff."

The Children

There are eighteen children in the Marshview II a.m. class. The afternoon class was not observed for this study. All of the children, ten boys and eight girls, are Caucasian and four or five years old. They all ride the bus to and from school. The entire group appears healthy, clean, and very neatly dressed. Each child wears a name tag and bus number, which hangs from a piece of yarn worn around the neck.

Although these children are equivalent in age to the group in Marshview I, they demonstrate a number of behaviors which make them appear younger: e.g., two children such their thumgs; others crawling into their teachers'

laps; and more children wait for an adult's guidance before engaging in play. Two children have been mainstreamed into the class. Bobby, who is four years old, has attended Pre-K for just over a year. He was described by the Pre-K director as "developmentally delayed."

Director:

"He has a total developmental delay of at least two years. They don't really know what caused it. He had Hylen membrane disease at birth. He may be EMR. Bobby's at the CP center two days a week for therapy, but his progress is very slow."

Observer:

"Can you tell me what you mean by total developmental delay?"

Director:

"He's just functioning like a much younger child. He started everything later, like talking. His gross motor is way behind what it should be. He's still falling a lot."

Allison is the other child who was mainstreamed into the Marshview II class. Allison is five years old, and she entered the Pre-K program in September. She will be starting kindergarten in the fall. Allison also attends the Cerebral Palsy Clinic for an afternoon speech and language program. The teacher of the afternoon program had referred Allison to the Pre-K director.

Director:

"In the Woodland II morning group, we have two children - one of them, Allison, came with an aide. That was a condition I made for her to be admitted into the program. We've had to do that before. I think that, maybe the aide will only be necessary for the first couple of months, that's the way it worked out in Angela's case, and then the aide can help out with the other kids and free up one of the teachers to give extra attention to a child like Allison."

Observer:

"Why did you think Allison needed an aide?"

Director:

"She was down as language delayed. Children with language delays can have so many other problems. Allison was at the CP center in the PALS program, and she had to be restrained for the first two months there."

Observer:

"Can you say more about that?"

Director:

"They had to tie her in a wheelchair. She was totally out of control, just wild and unmanageable. So I said that she'd have to come with an aide into this program. We really needed the aide at first, but now she's just another assistant in the room. Remember I mentioned that one room didn't have a head teacher and only eighteen kids. That's the class with the aide."

Observer:

"It sounds like Allison has settled into your program."

Director:

"Oh, that girl is a different child. She's come a long way, but her language is still practically unintelligible. Mary Lou, the aide, can understand every word she says, but no one else can."

The Classroom Environment

The Marshview II classes occupy a suite of three rooms; i.e., two large carpeted classrooms with a complete kitchen separating them. A bathroom is also included in the suite of rooms. A special education class for "the trainably mentally handicapped," now located in another building, had occupied the rooms previously. The first large classroom is referred to as the "large activity room." It contains very little furniture. An old upright piano is positioned just inside the door to the room. Half of the room is the block area, containing shelves with blocks of all sizes and a wooden train set with tracks. A sandtable is positioned alongside the block area, with black plastic taped down on the carpeting beneath it. A large open area has been left in the center of the room. The bulletin board, which runs the length of the wall, has been sectioned off into three displays: a large winter scene with the title "We Play in Winter"; a birthday theme with a gift box for each child labeled with name and date; and an "Information for Parents" collection of newspaper articles regarding nutrition and parenting practices.

A fourth of the room is designated as the "role playing area." It contains play furniture, including a stove, sink, and refrigerator, dolls, doll bed and child's cot. During the course of observations, the "role playing area" was elaborately equipped with props for two themes; i.e., "the hospital" and "the post office." For the weeks of playing hospital, the props included nurses' caps, white lab coats, a green operating room outfit complete with shoecovers, stethoscopes, cotton swabs, elastic bandages, etc.. A desk with a sign reading "Receptionist" and a black telephone, steno pad, and pencil were set up at the entrance to the area. A line of chairs and a sign "Waiting Room" were set up in another part of the area.

The kitchen, which separates the two large classrooms, has windows on either side looking into the other rooms. It contains appliances and cupboards at one end. A set of kitchen table and chairs is used by the teachers for materials and their personal belongings. A child-size table and seven chairs are at the other end of the room.

The other large classroom is called the "small activity" room. It is divided into the following activity areas: easel and water table; science, including guinea pigs, an aquarium, and plants; manipulatives (puzzles, small blocks); listening station with record player and earphones; and reading, with a couch, floor pillows, and bookcase.

The bulletin board, which runs the length of the room, displays posters related to the "role playing" theme and childrens' artwork. The artwork usually consists of identical shapes (shamrocks, umbrellas, eggs, tulips), which are cut from different colors of construction paper and decorated with crayon or paint by the children.

Organization and Daily Activities

Although the starting times for the Pre-K classes are staggered, the sequence of activities in Marshview I and II are identical. One can easily predict the type of activity taking place in either class by checking the time. In addition to the daily schedule, Marshview II shares another important organizational feature with Marshview I; i.e., "locker teacher" and "locker group." Each teacher assistant has a group of six children for which she is mainly responsible.

During the initial "open play" which precedes breakfast, only the "small activity room" is available to the children. One of the assistants is preparing breakfast at this time, and the other two assistants and teacher aide are in the "small activity room." There is less activity going on than that observed in Marshview I during this time block. The children were more curious about the observer and sought interaction with her, while the observer's presence usually went unnoticed in Marshview I.

As soon as I sat down, Allison came over to me. Her speech is very difficult to understand, but she spoke without hesitation:

Allison:

"Hi, my name is Allison." She extended both of her hands in my direction.

Observer:

"Hi, Allison. My name is Sandy." I took Allison's right hand in mine, and we shook hands. Allison is a husky girl, with straight dark brown hair and bangs, which she frequently brushes out of her eyes with the back of her hand. She has deep set, blue eyes with black lashes.

Allison:

"Hi, Sandy...(a slight pause, as she leans on the back of the chair next to me.) I know my alphabet...a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i...(the letters trail off) I can make a rabbit." She moved to the easel just behind us in the art area. There is a yellow plastic smock hanging on the easel, and Allison pulled it on over her head. Without hesitation, she picked up a paint brush from the jar of green paint and made an approximation of a rabbit, complete with ears and whiskers. She painted with the one color. At the end of one brush stroke, Allison pulled off the smock and left the

easel - all in one non-stop motion.

The staff in the room uses this time to "catch up" on assessments, both those required by the state and those items listed on the Pre-K skills record. There is a large three-ringed binder for each child, which is divided into sections such as home visits, health records, readiness skills, etc. When working one-to-one with a child, the teacher gets the child's notebook and records the results. One group of children routinely worked puzzles together during this play period. The others either observed what the staff was doing or followed the observer through the room, occasionally getting involved with something along the way.

(The observer had moved to the doorway of the kitchen, watching one of the assistants, Ms. Phipps, who was preparing breakfast.)

Several children had entered the large, empty classroom, and Ms. Phipps directed them back into the other classroom: "The activity room is closed, find something to do in the other room, please." To me, Ms. Phipps explained: "They'd be in there the whole time if they could - you know they can run around, do a lot, and the sand table is in there, too." Standing in the doorway of the activity room, Ms. Phipps pointed out the area all equipped for playing hospital which I had noticed before: "See, it's all set up for role playing. We're doing doctor and nurse this week. Each week or two we do a different theme. The kids just love it." Ms. Phipps worked quickly and efficiently in the kitchen area, putting food and containers away, while she talked to me.

Ms. Phipps:

"You'll see, as soon as breakfast is all cleared away and I open that room, they're all going to be running into there."

During the breakfast meal which follows open play, routines similar to those in Marshview I are observed. The children sit in their locker groups. Their names are printed on oaktag strips, and the children must find their names and then sit in that space.

When the large activity room is opened after breakfast, typically eleven to twelve children immediately move into that room. Ms. Phipps usually oversees the activity in this room, while the rest of the staff works in the kitchen or other classroom.

> Five or six children were over in the "roleplaying area" already putting on the stethoscope, hats, large white aprons, and one girl is attempting to get into the white lab coat. One other girl has on the green operating room coverings for hair and shoes, as well as the wrap around smock. A child comes up to her and says, "It's my turn to wear it." The child refuses to give the costume up and the other child runs into the kitchen area calling, "Ms. Phipps..." Shortly, Ms. Phipps comes in with the girl and approaches the group in the hospital setup, "Janie waited all day yesterday for a turn to wear the doctor's suit, so it's her turn next." In a few minutes I'm going to ask you to let her have it." Ms. Phipps patted the girl's back, and reassured her that she would get a turn for sure.
>
> At this point a squabble between the children breaks out in the block area. All of the children in the dressup clothes have come over to the area getting on top of the platform and doing various kinds of dances. Children that had been building over there in the first place were getting angry because they had plans to make this into a boat and the children were now coming over and saying no, it was a house and they were having a party. The children were getting angry and arguing with each other. Both Allison and Bobby are now in the area. At this point, Ms. Phipps goes over to the light switch against the wall and turns the lights on and says, "Boys and Girls, look over at me, boys and girls look over here. I think we have a problem. People in the block area are arguing with one another. Now instead of arguing what could you do? I think you should think about what you could do instead of arguing. Now the children were building a boat and they really don't want you other children coming over and getting inside of their boat. Maybe you could build two things. There are lots of blocks." Then Ms. Phipps turns the lights back off, comes over near where I'm sitting to talk to one of the mothers that's visiting. The children seem to have worked out some kind of compromise, where now what they're making is a houseboat.

The children move in and out of the roles they adopt in dressup clothes, carry on conversations and maintain their play with little adult supervision. Both of the children who are mainstreamed into the Marshview H class, Bobby and Allison, participate fully in the dramatic play.

> Rusty was sitting at the "receptionist" desk, with pencil and paper pad, and a telephone. Several children had picked up dolls and were seated in a row of chairs, waiting to see the doctors and nurses. The children in costume would walk over and get one of the "parents" and bring them into the doctor's office. The girl in the green operating clothes took the doll from one of the children, and said: "Your baby is sick. She needs a shot." The "doctor" used a cotton swab to give the shot and laid the doll down in the crib. "She'll be all right now." Allison walked into this area holding her elbow and saying "doctor, doctor." A couple of the children in costume rushed over to her and helped her lay down in the bed. The nurse gave her a shot in the arm, and the doctor got a sling off the cabinet and attempted to get it over Allison's head and place her arm in it. They experienced a great deal of difficulty with this and asked Ms. Phipps for help in tying it on.
>
> Bobby went up to Rusty and picked up the telephone. Rusty said "No!" and pulled it from his hands. Bobby calmly sat down at the desk along side Rusty, who then got up and became one of the parents waiting to see the doctor or nurse with his child. Bobby picked up the telephone and held it to his ear. Another patient quickly walked up to the desk and asked to see a doctor. Bobby pointed to the chairs, saying "Ok, sit down..."

Locker groups meet for small group instruction with their locker teachers, just as in Marshview I. In this class, however, the children have been grouped by ability.

Observer:

"So, how did you divide up the children - you mentioned you had the lowest group."

Ms. Hawley:

"Mhmm. We do a screening at the beginning of the year. It's required by the state and then we divide the kids up by what they need the most. So my group - which is my locker group too - is really low in language. Ms. Sorenson has the highest group, not just in language but those kids were doing a lot of skills when they came. Bobby needs language, too, but he's in Ms. Phipps' group. It would be too much to have Bobby and Allison in the same group."

Observer:

"Why is that?"

Ms. Hawley:

"Well, you know they both go to the CP Center in the afternoons. Allison goes every day and Bobby just twice a week. So, it's a lot to get over there, observe, get the IEP from them, and keep up with all the paperwork here. So we spread it out some."

During the structured small group lesson, each locker group meets in a separate room and works on a different task. Mary Lou Anceti, the aide assigned to Allison, usually leaves whatever project she's working on, and sits close by to Ms. Hawley's group. During the series of observations, Mary Lou redirected Allison to the task, (answering questions about a story), only once.

Throughout the morning session, the teaching team and children in Marshview II move through the predictable, well-established routines. Although the tone is more structured and controlled in the Marshview II class, the routines and activities are very similar in all the classes. As the children prepare to leave for their buses, the emphasis on independence, which is so readily observable during meals, is apparent in the manner in which the teachers respond to requests for help from their locker groups. The tasks involved in getting outerwear on, such as zipping up a jacket were started, when necessary, but never completed, by a teacher. Following dismissal, the teaching team has an hour break between sessions. Fifteen to twenty minutes of this break is usually devoted to setting up the rooms for the afternoon session. The same activities are typically repeated for the p.m. session.

EXPERIENCES OF THE FIVE CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS BEING MAINSTREAMED

Perceptions and Influences of the Director and Teaching Staff

Allison, Bobby, Beth, Craig and Aimee all have individual educational plans (I.E.P.'s). Their I.E.P.'s, however, are not written by the Pre-K staff and pertain to services provided at the Cerebral Palsy Center, or, as in Aimee's case, to speech therapy which takes place outside the classroom.

In general, the Marshview Pre-K teachers do not perceive themselves as routinely singling out the five mainstreamed children for special attention or programming. During the course of daily classroom activities, they have similar expectations for all the children in the areas of behavior, task completion, and participation. Assistance is given to the children on an "as-needed" basis.

The direction on the phonograph record was to "Put your head through the ring," and Bobby held the ring in his hands. He saw the other children raise their rings, and he did the same, but was unable to complete the action. He maintained raising his ring, while the next direction was to jump over the ring. He did not follow the direction, but continued to look around at the other children. He attempted to copy their jumping back and forth over their rings, but he did so while holding onto his ring and raising his body up and down, a slight jumping-in-place. Ms. Phipps moved over to Bobby repeated the direction, and physically assisted Bobby through the action. When attempting to jump over the ring, Bobby fell, attempted it again, and landed on the ring rather than over it. Ms. Phipps responded, "Good jumping, Bobby."

Differences in the abilities of the five mainstreamed children to participate and behave appropriately are not anticipated by the staff; e.g., during large group activities, such as story or music times, the teachers do not routinely seat themselves next to Bobby, Allison, Aimee, Beth and Craig. Verbal cues are called out to the children when necessary and all the children are encouraged to help each other or "follow along" with the actions of their peers. The range of activities and both the quantity and quality of teacher support, are generally the same for all the children.

(The first few minutes of open play in Marshview II)

At that point, one of the children came over to Ms. Phipps and asked her to help zip up the dress she was putting on. Allison, in the dressup area, found a basketball or baseball shirt that she had put on. Apparently she had worn this before because Ms. Phipps said to her, "Hey, Allison, you really like that shirt don't you. You look so nice in it. Here, look in the mirror. See Allison, there you are. Don't you look nice."

Allison doesn't respond verbally at this point but seems to be grinning into the mirror. When Ms. Phipps moves on to help another child with an article of clothing, Allison struck a pose in the mirror with one hand on her hip and the other arm flexed as if she were showing her muscle. It was a comical pose and she grinned at herself in the mirror.

(Later during that play period, an argument broke out between the children in the dressup area and the children playing with blocks.)

The children seem to have worked out some kind of compromise where now what they're making is a houseboat, but not the entire crew agrees with this and Allison starts arguing with this and starts calling loudly to another child "Come over here, come over here" and nobody is answering her and Allison is getting more and more upset. At this point, Ms. Phipps suggests to another child that Allison is upset because she has no one to build with and would this child please go over and help.

(Just before lunchtime in Marshview I, Aimee had come back into the classroom from a session with the speech therapist.)

Aimee sat down with her locker group, but made no motion toward preparing anything for herself. To her teacher's questions of "Would you like some soup?"; "What kind of sandwich would you like today?", Aimee either didn't respond at all or she shook her head "No." Ms. Panski moved her attention to other children at the table, and Aimee watched them, still sucking her index finger. After several minutes, Ms. Panski again focused on Aimee, holding out the basket of bread and asking, "Would you like to make a sandwich?" Aimee nodded "Yes" and took a slice of bread. "What do you want on your sandwich?" Aimee responded "meat," but very softly.

According to the Pre-K director and teaching staff, the five mainstreamed children do not demand any special teacher strategies:

Observer:

"It's interesting to hear you explain it. Because when I talk to the teachers, like Diane and Lorin and I ask them "Do you do anything special for Craig, for Aimee," they usually say "Oh no, nothing special."

Rita:

"Well, we don't separate them out and say, 'Ok, Beth, it's your time to be alone and work on your handicap.' You know that we don't, but we plan things. Last year we sat down and figured out some really realistic goals for Beth. Mrs. Bart, the itinerant teacher wasn't doing it. She was really too itinerant. So Diane and I sat down and figured out what we thought would be right for Beth. She really needed special goals. We couldn't have her distinguish colors, because we didn't know the extent of her handicap."

(Ms. Sorenson, an assistant in Marshview II was being interviewed.)

Observer:

"Do you do anything special, just for Bobby and Allison?"

Ms. Sorenson:

"I don't think so. They may need a little more help, but we treat them the same. Well, we have what you might call "hidden structure," and I think that helps too."

Observer:

"What's that?"

Ms. Sorenson:

"Well, we know when we're working on some skill with the kids, but they don't. So when we plan the week, we may decide that one of us will work on the skill a few extra times with one of the kids - you know, just take him in the other room for a few minutes away from free play. So we know who needs what, and we just fit it in. We keep track in one of these (hands over a big red three-ringed notebook). See, here's where we write down about home visits, and here are skill check lists, testing. We do that for all the kids and it's really not different for Bobby and Allison except that they go to the CP Center."

Rather than employing special strategies to support the children with disabilities, some general practices, such as positive reinforcement, are viewed as beneficial to all the children.

Observer:

"I mentioned things to the teachers, like 'How did you plan for Bobby to participate in as many activities as he does?' They looked at me and said, 'Well, we just help him.'" (Rita's laughter)

Rita:

"Well, one of the things that goes along with that, and it's another part of the philosophy, and that is positive reinforcement. The classroom is totally positive. There's nothing negative. So encouraging Bobby, you know, is if he hops on the right foot - if he does something a little right, and you know, it's all positive reinforcement. It's pats on the back, kisses and encouragement for things that he's doing really well. We really do not focus on negatives at all. At least when I've been in the classrooms. That's really the policy and the way that we approach kids and their families. As best we can, and yet we don't give pats for you know, for poor behavior or for when somebody doesn't get it right. It's really a very positive climate that we like to foster. And that helps every child, not only disabled children."

During the course of observations and interviews, it became apparent that the teachers were aware of the different kinds of needs demonstrated by the mainstreamed children. Yet, the teachers repeatedly shared their opinion that "nothing special" was required in terms of teaching strategies and programming. This discrepancy between what is known and what is done was observed on numerous occasions when a child's identified need was not responded to by a teacher support or planned intervention.

Observer:

"What do you think Bobby's needs are?"

Ms. Phipps:

"Oh, Sandy, I'm not sure. He really needs so much. There's his language and speech. He's only using two and three word phrases, and sometimes they're hard to understand. He's better now at moving around, but you must have noticed how awkward he is when he tries to do anything physical - like running, or climbing. He still falls over nothing quite a bit."

(Language, speech and gross motor development were identified as needs. Yet, Bobby receives no "special" support in response to them.)

Several of the boys went right over to the block area and started lining up the large hollow blocks. Bobby is at the sand table, holding on to its sides and pulling himself forwards and back in a rocking motion. He watches the boys playing with the blocks and says to them, "Sand Open," but the boys either do not hear him or choose not to respond. Bobby repeats his statement to them, and when they still do not answer, he looks at me and says "sand," patting it with his hand. I responded, "Yes, Bobby, it looks like nice sand to play in." He repeats, "sand open." There is a wooden cover for the sand laying on the floor, and I guess he means that now the cover is off the sand table.

During this transition time, Bobby is wandering around the room without becoming involved with any materials or children. He saw one of the children walking around with a furry green puppet, and he walked alongside of that girl smiling when she made it "talk" to people in the room. Bobby bounces a bit as he walks, shifting the top of his body from side to side with each step. Occasionally, he parrots a word the girl says who is carrying the puppet.

In Marshview I, both the lead teacher, Ms. Kennedy, and Aimee's locker teacher, Ms. Panski, had commented that Aimee was speaking much less since she had been fitted with a hearing aid; in fact, "hardly saying a word."

Observer:

"Do you do anything different for Aimee because she has so little hearing?"

Ms. Kennedy:

"No, I don't think so. We have to speak directly to her to make sure she hears directions, but I can't think of anything special. We'd like to get her talking more, but we're not going to do anything new with her. She's out there now with the speech teacher."

After speech therapy, Aimee appeared, on several occasions, to have difficulty re-entering the classroom and its ongoing activity. She often stood apart, looking at the floor and sucking a finger, and did not initiate interaction with a child or adult. Aimee's non-talking went unchallenged, with no teacher intrusion attempting to elicit a verbal response, even when a natural reward or consequence for talking was present.

> Aimee and Kate were sitting together, again, at lunch. They were both enthusiastically eating orange sections - sucking the juice with the entire section against their mouths - flattened like large, orange-colored clown smiles. Aimee looked more animated and at ease today. Her chair was pulled right up to the table, making eye contact with Kate, giggling. Both girls reached for more oranges, but the plate was empty. Mrs. P. had a whole, un-peeled orange on the tray. Kate asked her to cut it up, but Mrs. P. suggested that she check Ms. Kennedy's table and ask if there were some more orange slices there. Aimee responded, "Me, too." She and Kate walked over toward the other table, but Aimee stopped half way and resumed the posture I had observed last time, slouched down, finger in mouth, rubbing one foot on the rug in front of her.
>
> Kate requested another section and received it. She skipped back over to Mrs. P.'s table. Aimee watched Kate get the orange slice, glanced at Ms. K. who was looking in another direction. Aimee returned to her chair and sat down next to Kate watching her eat and enjoy the orange. Aimee was licking her lips occasionally, watching every bite that Kate made, but she herself made no attempt to get what she wanted.
>
> Mrs. P. remarked to Kate, "Did Ms. Kennedy have more orange, Kate?" Kate nodded and Mrs. P. continued gathering things up to carry back into the kitchen area.

Variations of the above incicent were observed on several occasions. Aimee's experiences might have been interpreted as lessons in natural consequences. However, these "lessons" were not usually observed by the

teachers nor was follow-up planned to assist Aimee in verbalizing her needs or intentions.

> As the groups assembled to return to their lockers and prepare to go home, I checked with Mrs. P. regarding the orange-slice incident and Aimee. Apparently, she hand't noticed Aimee stopping midway and returning empty handed, and it was not a planned intervention. I asked Mrs. P. if there were any special strategies being implemented to increase Aimee's speech.
>
> Mrs. P.:
>
> "Not really, except for seeing Lenore, the speech teacher, twice a week. If she really wants something, I think Aimee would ask for it. I think she needs some more time to get use to all the changes since the hearing aids."

The fact that the teaching staff does not perceive special attention or efforts as necessary for the mainstreamed children may be related to a more general perception of the Pre-K program as already providing something "special" to children who are "different." The mandates of the state education department, such as ongoing assessment and health services, probably contribute to this perception. The criteria for admission to Pre-K set the majority of the children, and their families, apart as "different."

> Director:
>
> "They're (the teachers) very eager to take children who are different. When you're obviously working with the 90% low income - there are - you don't have to be disabled "physically" - there are a lot of other disabilities and the teachers have never objected to taking extra children. When we've reached our quota and someone comes in with really a problemed family, I will call any of the classrooms and say "will you take an extra child" and there's no question. There's no question about it."

The teachers, according to Rita Marcus, get so involved with the parents and children that they "can't separate their roles as just teachers and not social workers and psychiatrists." The director perceives the teachers as "going overboard" to respond to all the children and their families.

While the criteria for admission to the Pre-K do not pertain to the mainstreamed children, these criteria seem to have influenced the teacher perceptions of the children identified as "handicapped". During interviews with the teachers, the families and homes of the mainstreamed children were labeled as "good" or "bad", and the families were somewhat held accountable for the children's current needs and progress.

> "Oh, his mother is dizzy. We set up a time for a visit and then she doesn't show up. He was almost dropped from therapy at the CP Center because his parents didn't bring him. I think they both work and couldn't keep things straight. They seem to love Bobby, but I think they're still scared he's going to be retarded or something."

> "There are no limits or routines in that house, so she started school like a wild animal. You know, and that's a shame because Allison can do a lot and if they work on her speech, she could really probably get on in school with no problem. Oh, and that's another thing. Allison's mother doesn't think Allison has a speech problem, says that she can understand everything Allison says. If her home were different, I don't think Allison would have any problems other than her speech, and maybe even that would be better."

In general, the Marshview Pre-K director and staff view the five children who are mainstreamed as being more like, than different from, their classmates. While this view facilitates the children's admission to and participation in the Pre-K program, it does not facilitate intensive educational programming for individual needs.

The Children's Progress and Future School Placements

In the Marshview Pre-K program, most children attend for one or two years, and, at age five, begin the half-day kindergarten in their neighborhood schools. For Craig and Aimee, this will hold true. Craig's condition has stabilized, and, other than being smaller physically, he will not stand out from his peers. After another year of Pre-K, Aimee is expected to attend

kindergarten and continue to receive speech therapy.

Beth has attended Pre-K for two years, and she also has received supportive services by an itinerant teacher of the blind.

Rita Marcus:

"The point is that Beth is eligible for kindergarten, age-wise, but she's not ready for a kindergarten experience. Her parents, I think, are moving to Chittenango, and there are no programs for handicapped children her age. So we had a committee on the handicapped meeting, and I said that I would make the exception. For a child with a handicapping condition, I would make the exception and take her into Pre-K. But I would not do it for any other child of kindergarten age."

"Not ready," in Beth's case, meant that, without supportive services, she would not be able to participate in a large group and perform the more structured academic tasks expected in kindergarten.

One of the children, Bobby, will not be returning to Pre-K or attending kindergarten. In spite of progress observed by his teachers in the identified areas of language and motor development, Bobby's educational needs are seen as too demanding for a mainstreamed kindergarten placement.

Observer:

"What about next year?"

Ms. Phipps:

"He'll be in Sharon Jost's class at the CP center, full-time.

Observer:

"That's a program only for children with special needs, isn't it?"

Ms. Phipps:

"Yeah, I think I know what you mean. The other kids here are great for Bobby. He really tries to do as they do. But I think it will be more intensive for his speech and language. It's probably worth his investing a year to get that. Then, we'll have to see where he is. Maybe he'll continue to catch up and could start a regular kindergarten when he's six."

The director is less optimistic about Bobby's future school placement:

Director:

"I think he's made gains. Language was his disabling area. At the CP Center in his program, they focus on language because he has so many other handicaps. He just wasn't walking well at all. Now he gets around pretty well. He drags a leg, you know, one leg isn't right. Manipulation - you know, I think he's done a lot more small motor. So he's improved, but not really the way we thought. I guess we thought he'd be talking in full sentences, but maybe that wasn't realistic. Maybe we don't know enough about language development."

"...you know, unless they can figure out better what exactly is going on for Bobby, he may very well get labeled mentally retarded and be in a special class farther down the line. Unless his speech improves, I'm not sure if Marshview will have him in a kindergarten class."

The program Bobby will attend next year has been extended to a full day. There will be six or seven other children in the class, and they all are labeled "severely speech and language delayed."

Rita Marcus:

"We know that Bobby didn't make as much progress as we would have liked, and we think that perhaps he needs more testing, maybe he has other problems that haven't been uncovered yet, and that's why his placement next year is going to be full day at the CP Center. In a way I'm sad that he won't be with typical children, he's such a social person. He just adores all the other kids, and next year he'll be with just five other kids, and a different environment. Sharon Jost has to run a different environment. It's not open, the room is subdued. I feel badly, but I understand that people from the clinic want to just try it for a year, it's a year out of his life, and see if academically he can make more gains."

For both Bobby and Beth, the overriding factor in determining a school program appears to be their abilities to handle the academic requirements of kindergarten.

In Allison's case, the staff perceives kindergarten as the appropriate placement, but with a few reservations regarding Allison's speech and behavior.

Observer:

"What will happen when Allison leaves Pre-K this year?"

Ms. Hawley:

"Not sure yet. I kinda wonder about that. We don't know if the district will pay for the aide to go with her. She probably will go into a regular half-day kindergarten, but I don't know what it will be like. They won't be able to understand her at first. I doubt if her speech will change that much by September. And when she has to do something she doesn't want to do, who knows? She may really let loose. That's why I think that Mary Lou should go with her, at least until she gets use to it."

Observer:

"What about after kindergarten?"

Ms. Hawley:

"Well, like I said before, it all kinda depends on her speech. She's a bright little girl, but if people can't understand her... then I don't know."

Observer:

"How do you think the other children see Allison, how do they get along with her?"

Mary Lou:

"At first I think they thought she was different. She was always running and they saw her trying to hit me and they were kind of wary of her, but not now. I just wish they could do something more with her speech. When she leaves here for school I really don't know. They really don't know the dialect. They're going to have a real hard time trying to understand what she's saying. They don't know what kind of damage she had. Whether it was perinatal, post natal, prenatal, but unless you know her dialect, like I've gotten to from being with her so much, you really can't understand what she's telling you."

The director and teachers at Marshview Pre-K attribute much of the children's progress to the opportunity they had to learn from the modeling of their peers.

Observer:

"Ms. Phipps, you mentioned that Bobby is changing. How is his progress measured?"

Ms. Phipps:

"Well, with him we do it mostly by observing. He can't do most of the tests that the state says we have to do. He's down off their charts. He can do some of the tasks we test the other kids on, like ordering and sorting, but not too much else. He follows

along and joins in now whereas before he was more like a doll - you had to move him through things or he'd just sit on the floor."

Ms. Sorenson:

"That's why I think it's good for the kids to be with each other. Allison and Bobby have learned a lot by watching the other kids."

"Bobby participated sporadically with the triangle he was given to play - no teacher prompting. He had difficulty holding the triangle properly and striking it, for he would drop it and miss his turn. Bobby observed the other children nearby and attempted to imitate how they held and struck their triangles. As the record continued, he managed to play the instrument several times, correctly. When a couple of nearby children engaged in some inappropriate behaviors, (using the instruments for fun and teasing instead of music), Bobby imitated these behaviors as well, seemingly not knowing that he was imitating anything more or less correct than striking the triangle."

The five children participated fully in all activities in Marshview I and II with little or no teacher support. The teachers emphasized that the level of participation, independence, and interaction with peers had been increasing since the children's first days of Pre-K. Perhaps the most dramatic change in performance was seen in Allison, who entered Pre-K with an aide.

Observer:

"Rita told me that you're Allison's aide."

Mary Lou:

"Right, I was with her all the time. You wouldn't believe how she's changed."

Observer:

"What kind of changes Mary Lou?"

Mary Lou:

"Well, the hyperactivity level has - not diminished but improved. She'll do what the other kids are doing. Before she played only by herself, but now she'll play alongside and sometimes even join other kids. She has more of an attention span now and she'll sit and try things. She was running from one thing to another before. She wouldn't even sit at a snack table with the other kids. She was so aggressive that I had to be ducking around with her.

> (O.C. Mary Lou acted out what she meant by ducking, kind of dodging left and right with her head and shoulders as if she were trying to avoid being hit.) And outside, she was unbelievable, she'd be tearing around all over, you couldn't take your eyes off of her."

Mary Lou now functions in the classroom as a general aide and substitute. The changes in Allison's behavior were attributed to "getting her out of her home" and to the "consistency of routines" in the classroom. The Marshview II teachers all stressed that, with Allison, they "taught what was expected at certain times and stuck with it." On one occasion Allison was observed, not only participating, but enhancing the entire group experience:

> Ms. Phipps changed the record to an instrumental one and let the children just play along. During one particular Dixieland type, jazzy song, Allison started moving back and forth and keeping time. Finally, it seemed like the beat just took her over, and she stood up to dance. Ms. Hawley, sitting near me, laughed and commented to me - "Allison can mooove!" She then commented to Allison, who was standing with her feet wide apart, arms and head moving vigorously to the beat, "I don't blame you, Allison - let's all do it." Ms. Hawley stood up and many of the children jumped up to dance. She commented, "Look at Allison. Boy, you're right up with the disco, Allison!" The record continued, and all the children were joining in - giggling, looking at themselves in the mirror - obviously enjoying the chance to move around freely. Ms. Phipps commented, "Look at Allison. She really has the moves (laughter)." Allison was really getting warmed up. "Come on, can you dance like Allison?" The focus was clearly on Allison's dancing ability, and she glowed with delight.

The teachers are required to chart the progress of all the children in the areas of academic, social, emotional and physical growth. All of this data is forwarded to the state education department. The data, which documents progress and change, is much less significant for the five mainstreamed children, for they are not included in the state's target population of 90% high risk families." The five mainstreamed children will be evaluated by the district's Committee on the Handicapped, as they reach school age, and placement will then be recommended.

Programmatic Elements Related to Mainstreaming

Teacher Preparation and Training

As previously discussed, the teachers in the Marshview Pre-K classes state that "nothing special" is done in the way of programming for the five children identified as being mainstreamed. One exception to this perception is the teachers' preparation for a child's entry into their classes. This preparation includes observation of the child, reading available information on the identified handicap, consultation with specialists already providing related services, and attending workshops or conferences.

Director:

"So the teachers on their own learn a lot. With Bobby, all the teachers went over to the CP Center to watch him there. So our teachers really go overboard. An administrator could not ask for anything more."

Observer:

"With the children here that have been identified as having special needs - that's Bobby, Allison, Craig, Aimee and Beth - do the teachers need any special information or reports or help from the outside to get those children started?"

Director:

"The teachers absolutely feel the need. I don't even have to tell them. We've had for Beth, who is blind, an itinerant teacher for the blind. The teachers attended a workshop which she gave as a matter of fact. I just had teachers go down to Syracuse University a couple of weeks ago, there was a workshop on handicapped youngsters. Every time there is a workshop. I had put money into the budget last year for teachers to attend. I'm really big on workshops, if there is something pertinent. And so, anytime material comes out on handicaps, I will duplicate that. Mrs. Bart, the itinerant teacher of the blind, has given a lot of her suggestions, we've given suggestions to her. The teachers are interested in learning. They will read up themselves on what the problem is.

Preparation also takes the form of providing current materials for classroom use.

Observer:

"I know that in Marshview I, in talking to Diane, she told me that one of the students from the high school who wears a hearing aid came down to talk to the class before Aimee got her aid. I also noticed some materials in the classroom which explained disabilities to children in picture form - large and colorful."

Director:

"Right, we've done that this year. We've gotten things for all the classrooms. Some beautiful things have come out. It's something that we really need to talk about to kids, so that nothing is really secret. Last year we had a child with one arm, and we talked about that. I think it's really open, and the teachers are really sensitive, too."

According to the Pre-K director, the teachers' preparation for mainstreaming stems from their experience in early childhood education and their commitment to learning - "giving each child what he needs, whatever it is." In addition to crediting the teachers with the success of the Pre-K program, Rita Marcus identifies the teacher as the key element in making mainstreaming work.

Rita:

"Well, you must have some ideas about mainstreaming and what it takes to make it work. What do you think the key element is?"

Observer:

"Well, I could probably identify some of the things that help us at the school where I work. What do you think the key element is?"

Rita:

"It's the teacher, of course. There's not a doubt in my mind that if you get the right teacher, you can do anything. The teacher makes all the difference in the world. You can have the most modern school, well you saw what this building is like - only the latest, but when the classroom door is closed, the only thing that determines what happens for kids is the teacher."

Observer:

"Is it your teachers that make mainstreaming work in this program?"

Rita:

"Of course, our teachers will do anything for a child."

"Doing anything" is not equated to doing anything for any child. Prior to accepting a child with a disability, a number of factors are taken into account, including the type of disability, the supports necessary to respond to a child's needs, and the type of educational experience offered by the Pre-K classes.

Observer:

"Just one final question, Rita. I know you have to go. If you were contacted by another Pre-K director who had heard you were mainstreaming children with special needs into your program, what kind of guidelines or advice would you give? How do you make it work?"

Rita:

"Well, first of all, the administrator shouldn't make the decision alone, about accepting the kids. You have to talk to your staff. I would never impose a child on anyone, unless that child would be received with open arms. So the first thing I would say you have to say to your staff or team of teachers is, "Look, we have this child." And then you really have to observe that child before you make a final acceptance, observing the family or school if he's coming from somewhere else. Observe just what exactly his handicap is so you can relay that information to your team and talk about it. So they know exactly what kind of child they would be getting. We would never accept a child that we felt we could not help in some way."

Observer:

"Have there been any children with disabilities that you felt you could not maintain in this program?"

Rita:

"The only one, that I think I mentioned to you before, was last year when we did take an autistic child for a couple of months. And we took her. The district wouldn't fund an aide. The parents paid an aide to come in with her. We had a very good person, an aide who had been a sub for us, a very good person, who herself is handicapped. Had cerebral palsy and other problems, and so it was very interesting...we had a handicapped aide working with Heather, who was an autistic child. We tried our best, and it was in Diane's class. We really worked with the parents, and it didn't work out because we felt there was too much stimulation. And we didn't make that decision...The parent made that decision. They said she was off the wall at home. She probably needed a smaller classroom. It was the parents that decided that it was too much stimulation. We couldn't change our whole classroom and have no centers, but as a matter of fact, open classroom - I have found - works with every child, except for the child who's hyperactive.

In an open classroom, there is a lot of things going on, things all over the walls, kids moving and talking, jumping, and a truly hyperactive kid couldn't make it in that place. And we felt that Heather really couldn't make it. It was too much. She really couldn't focus. She really needs it quieter, not twenty four kids. But everybody else has really worked out well."

The "open classroom" environment in the Marshview Pre-K classes is mandated by the state education department. In addition, Rita Marcus identifies it as the type of environment most conducive to learning for preschool and elementary-aged children. Therefore, a child's ability to function within the parameters of the Pre-K's open classroom becomes an influential determinant of acceptance.

Director:

"I couldn't accept a child that was physically handicapped in a wheelchair. I don't know whether that would work well. I don't know. I'd have to figure that out. I wouldn't accept an autistic child or a child like Allison unless I had an aide for that child. I think a child should enter a program with a lot of plusses in his favor, Ok?"

Observer:

"What role would the aide play?"

Rita:

"Well, in Allison's case, her problem was not having control of her own body. We needed to have somebody who could remove her when she needs to be removed from the environment. We had to have an extra hand, someone who could give her the attention. With so many young children, threes and fours, we have to have someone for that child to call her own, to give her much more attention. Even with a ratio of 6:1, there may be a time when a child needs someone really special for a minute. And I wanted to give the child the best chance possible, like with Allison and with Heather, with having an aide there in case that child needed it, not hovering over her, but in case that child needed it. So, I think you have to know your own limits, you know, of what your program can do. I know, especially now after two years, what we can do for kids, so you just work within that. In accepting any child with a handicap, you have to do a lot of thinking about the whole situation beforehand. If you're not positive that the child can make it, then you shouldn't accept the child."

Once a child with special needs is accepted into the Pre-K program, "making it" seems to depend more on the child's management of the open classroom than on the teacher's preparation or training in a specific disability area.

The Pre-K Early Childhood Model

There are numerous features of the Marshview Pre-K which appear positively related to mainstreaming. Some of these features are required by the state education department, while others are required by Rita Marcus.

The ratio of children to staff, 6:1, maximizes the potential for individualization and in-depth knowledge of the children and their families. This child/staff ratio is reinforced by the "locker teacher" and "locker group" organization for planning, instruction, and home visitations. The fact that 90% of the program's population is drawn from families labeled "high risk" demands that the staff respond to a wide range of developmental abilities and needs.

One feature of the Marshview Pre-K classes which emerged throughout the series of observations was that of consistency. This consistency pervaded the routines, interactions, and activities in both Marshview I and II. Checking the time of day allowed a reliable prediction of what type of activity would be observed upon entering the classrooms. Though the styles of instruction and interaction differed between the Marshview I and Marshview II teaching teams, the members of each team related to the children and to each other, in a consistent, similar manner.

Observer:

"Maybe, can you tell me what you think mainstreaming requires to be successful?"

Ms. Phipps:

"Well, I know that there it's probably the team teaching. Right? We each have our groups, but then we plan together and share what needs to be done. Like Bobby is in my locker group, but Lila works with him, too. And consistency, too. That's been

real important for Allison and Bobby. The kids learn the routines, and they stay the same. That way you can see them learning to handle more and more."

Director:

"I think kids need to have a routine. I hate to use the word open classroom, but I guess what I like better is structured freedom, and that's what I've called my own classes and what I really call this. I think every young child needs to have a routine and a structure, know what's going to happen next. It does a great deal for self concept. It's building the child. And the child feels secure in knowing that at nine o'clock he's going to eat, etc.. There has to be a lot of things happening within that structure, these are just stop points, sign posts. And for a child who is handicapped, it helps because he has to deal with his own frustrations, and he needs to know that certain things are not going to change. I really feel that kids aren't going to use the materials, the experiences that we set up, unless they feel comfortable in the room. And that's our first step for kids with the handicaps is to get them feeling comfortable in the rooms, with the things in the room, and with each other, with the routines. That's just part of good early childhood education."

Discussion

The New York State Education Department has mandated a model for early childhood education which is effectively implemented in the Pre-K classes at Marshview Central School. The mandates for a high staff/child ratio, active, child-initiated learning, and parent involvement are consistent with Rita Marcus's teaching style and values as an educator. Since 90% of the Pre-K program's population must come from families identified as "at-risk" according to the state's criteria, a wide range of developmental abilities can be observed. Some of the children receive speech therapy as part of their pre-school program.

Although the program director has identified mainstreaming as a "special interest" of hers and of the staff, the emphasis of the Pre-K program is clearly directed at early childhood education, rather than the provision of special services. The five children mainstreamed into three of the classes receive all special programming or therapy outside of their classes, and, in all but one instance, from an entirely separate agency. No intensive efforts at remediation or support were observed; indeed, the teaching staff repeatedly emphasized that nothing different, no exceptional efforts, was required to respond to the children with disabilities. While the lack of special programming contributed to everyone being treated in a similar fashion, it also contradicts well-established principles in regard to developmental disabilities; i.e., the earlier and more intensive the intervention, the greater is the growth or change.

The disabilities of the mainstreamed children fall within a range from mild to moderate impairment. In one instance, the identified disability is cystic fibrosis; yet, Craig requires no supportive services and will be entering a regular kindergarten class without being labeled by the standard process. For a child to be mainstreamed into the Marshview Pre-K,

it is necessary that the child be judged capable of functioning in an open classroom with no special support other than a teacher's aide, when necessary.

Rita Marcus has a powerful influence both on the characteristics and content of the Marshview Pre-K program. She is solely responsible for the administration of the program. She teaches in the classrooms to model the methods she espouses and designs lesson plan forms for staff use which highlight the individualized objectives for the children. Rita Marcus professes unconditional positive regard for her staff and the quality of the Pre-K program. She uses the 10% open enrollment to mainstream children with disabilities and works closely with a friend who teaches at a private agency. Together, they select children for each other's programs and autonomously implement their decisions, consulting only the children's families.

The Marshview Pre-K program functions separately from the rest of the school. This separateness complements Rita Marcus's autonomy as an administrator, but may have a detrimental effect on the future school placements of the children with disabilities. There is little, if any, coordination between the Pre-K program and the Pupil Personnel Department in the district. None of the anallary staff, principals, or kindergarten teachers are familiar with the children leaving pre-K. As a result, mainstreaming may very well begin and end with Pre-K for several of the five identified children.

The classes in the Marshview Pre-K program provide a positive initial school experience to all the children. The rich, active environment gives the children access to a wide variety of experiences. However, the humanistic educational model of treating everyone the same may not do justice to the special needs of some young children. Perhaps, in their thoughtful consideration of the normal developmental characteristics common to all children, the

staff perceives the program as already doing something special. While the Pre-K program integrates children with special needs, its failure to also integrate special interventions and teaching strategies may detour some children from remaining in the mainstream.